

*The 2012 Voting Guide for People with Disabilities
was produced in cooperation with:*



Wisconsin Disability Vote Coalition

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Toll free: 866-VOTEWIS (868-3947)
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“Vote as if your life depends on it... because it does.”

Justin Dart, Disability advocate

The information in this publication is based on current Wisconsin election laws and is believed to be accurate. Questions on specific interpretations of the law should be referred to the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board.

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Why Vote?

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National elections for President usually get the most attention, but it is often the people who get elected to the State Legislature and the County Board whose decisions have the most impact on your daily life.

Despite all the money in politics, elections still come down to votes.

Many elections are very close: you may have read about recounts in Wisconsin elections because the vote totals were so close.

So, your vote matters. We hope this booklet helps you learn more about how to exercise your right to vote.

Getting Involved

When you get involved with elections you can work to elect people who support the issues that matter most to you.

Who represents me now?

You can go on the internet to www.legis.state.wi.us and select the link called "Who Represents Me?" to find out who your state and U.S. representatives are.

You can also visit <https://myvote.wi.gov> which has a full listing of all national, state and local officials who represent you. It also has information about where you vote.

You may also call the Legislative Hotline at 1-800-362-9472.

Who Can Vote?

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In order to be eligible to vote, you must be:

- ➔ a **U.S. citizen** on the day of registration.
- ➔ at least **18 years old** on or before Election Day.
- ➔ a **resident of Wisconsin** and the election district for at least 28 consecutive days before Election Day.

Who Cannot Vote?

Individuals lose their right to vote if:

1. He/she has been judged by a court as incompetent and been appointed a guardian. **Some people lose the right to vote when a guardian is appointed simply because no one thought about letting them keep the right to vote. A person with a guardian can ask the court at any time to restore any right, including the right to vote.**
2. He/she has been found by a court to be unable to understand the voting process.
3. He/she has been convicted of a felony and has not completed probation or parole.

Guardianship

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A person's right to vote can only be taken away by a judge. A person under an active power of attorney for healthcare can still vote. If there is a question, the guardianship papers should be checked.

Some people lose the right to vote when a guardian is appointed simply because no one thought about letting them keep the right to vote. A person with a guardian can ask the court at any time to restore any right, including the right to vote.

Voters Who Are Homeless

Homeless individuals may designate a fixed location as their residence for voting purposes if it is an identifiable location in the state of Wisconsin which could conceivably serve as a temporary residence. This location may be a homeless shelter, a park bench, or other location where a homeless individual may spend time or return to when absent.

People who are homeless can use an affidavit on public or private social service agency letterhead identifying that person and describing the individual's residence for voting purposes.

Registering to Vote

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In Wisconsin you can register to vote on election day and vote that same day. You can also register to vote before election day.

If you vote at least once every four years and stay in the same voting district, you only have to register one time.

Three Ways to Register to Vote

- 1) Register **at the polls** on Election Day.
- 2) Register **by mail**. Visit <https://myvote.wi.gov> to learn more about absentee voting or visit the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board website to print a Voter Registration Form.

Or, write or call your city, town or village clerk's office and ask them to send you a Voter Registration Form. **Follow each instruction carefully and mail it back before the deadline. It must be postmarked at least 20 days before the election.**

- 3) Register in person at your **city, town or village clerk's office** until 5 p.m. on the Friday before Election Day.

Information You Need to Register to Vote

When you register to vote you will need to complete a **Voter Registration Form**.

If you are unable to complete and sign the form yourself, someone can assist you. You must provide the name and address for the person assisting you.

The Voter Registration Form will ask you to provide the following information:

- 1) Your **full name**
- 2) The **address where you live and the address where you receive mail**
- 3) Your **date of birth**
- 4) Your **signature** and the date you complete the form
- 5) **Proof of residence at your current address.** Documents you can use should have your full name and current address on them, such as a Wisconsin's driver's license, Wisconsin I.D. card, utility bill or current lease. For a full list of documents you can use, please see: <http://gab.wi.gov/voters>

If you don't have proof of residence, you can register by mail at least 20 days before Election Day during the "Open Registration Period." In order to verify your address, a postcard will be sent to you at the address you list: so be sure you look for the postcard and if you don't receive it, notify your local clerk.
- 6) If you have a Wisconsin driver's license you must provide that **number**. If you do not have a Wisconsin driver's license you can use **either** a State I.D. card number or the last four numbers of your Social Security Number. If you have none of these, a number will be assigned to you.

Address Change

If you move, you must change your voter registration to your new address to be able to vote at your new location. You can make this address change by completing a new voter registration (see page 6). You can complete and submit a new registration form as soon as you move as long as you will be at your new address for 28 consecutive days before the election.

If changing your address on Election Day, you must bring proof of residence with your full name and new address to the polls. You must have lived at your new address for at least 28 consecutive days before the election.

Please be aware that if you haven't lived at your new address for 28 days you can still vote at the polling place or Clerk's Office associated with your previous address.

Confidential Voters

Qualified voters who are victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault or stalking have the option to have their names and addresses withheld from the public poll list or registration list. To find out more, contact your local Municipal Clerk. A list of all Clerks can be found at <http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/directory>.

Going to Vote on Election Day

Locations where you go to vote in person are called polls or polling places.

Check with your city, town or village clerk's office to find out the location of your polling place.

If you have access to the internet, you can also find your polling place by going to this website: <https://myvote.wi.gov>. This website also contains information about what you will be voting for, who represents you, and if you are registered to vote.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Election Day.

Sample ballots and instructions on how to vote are posted at every polling place.

You may ask for assistance at the polls on how to use a voting machine or how to mark a ballot.

Signing the Poll Book

When you go to vote, the people at the voting location mark off your name on their list of voters. Now, due to a change in State law, people must sign by their name in that list, which is called the poll book.

You can sign in the way you usually sign your name using a stamp for example, or an x. If you are not physically able to sign by your name, you can request an exemption by asking the poll workers at the voting place.

Curbside Voting

You may request that a poll worker bring a ballot to the building entrance. That is called "curbside voting."

Provisional Ballots

A provisional ballot is a ballot that is marked by a voter but is not counted at the time it is cast. It is issued to a voter who is unable to provide the poll workers with documentation as required by Wisconsin and federal law.

There are two circumstances in which a voter is entitled to receive a provisional ballot:

- 1) A qualified elector who has been issued a current and valid Wisconsin driver's license registers to vote at a polling place on election day, but cannot list the driver's license number on the registration;
- 2) A first-time Wisconsin voter who registers by mail but does not provide an identifying document establishing proof of residence at the time he or she submits the registration form and is unable to provide the required proof of residence at the polling place.

Accessibility and Voting: It is Your Right

Every voter has the right to vote privately and independently. If you have a disability, there are several options available to you to make certain that is possible.

- 1) All polling places in Wisconsin are required to have an accessible voting machine.
- 2) Any voter who needs help at the polls has a right to assistance.

You can have help in casting your ballot for any reason including: if you have problems reading or writing; have difficulty with the English language; or have a disability which prevents you from being able to mark the ballot.

Ask for help when you give your name and address to the poll worker. You may not receive assistance from your employer, a candidate on the ballot or a representative of your labor organization if you are a union member. Any other person, including a poll worker, may assist you.

By law, a polling place must be accessible to a person with disabilities. If your polling place is not accessible, notify your city, town or village clerk's office and the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board.

Any voter can vote by absentee ballot if for any reason that voter cannot go to the polls on Election Day.

Absentee Voting At Your Clerk's Office

You may complete an absentee ballot in person at your city, town or village clerk's office. This can be done starting the 3rd Monday before the election until 5 p.m. on the Friday before the election.

Absentee Voting by Mail

To vote absentee by mail you need to request an Absentee Ballot. You must request the ballot no later than 5 p.m. on the Thursday before Election Day.

If you have access to the internet, go to the Wisconsin Government Accountability Board website and print the Application for Absentee Ballot form and mail it to your clerk. Or, you can call your Municipal Clerk. A listing of all municipal clerks can be found at <http://gab.wi.gov/clerks/directory>.

Requesting an Absentee Ballot

You can also send a written request for an absentee ballot to your city, town or village clerk's office. Your request must include:

- 1) Your **full name** (first, middle, and last names)
- 2) Your **legal voting address**
- 3) The **address where you want the absentee ballot sent**
- 4) A **statement** for which election(s) you desire an absentee ballot
- 5) A **declaration** that you meet all voting requirements
- 6) Your **signature**
- 7) **Date**

When you receive your ballot **follow all instructions carefully** and mail it back so it is postmarked on or before Election Day. Your clerk must receive your absentee ballot no later than 4 p.m. on the Friday after Election Day.

Permanent Absentee Ballot List

You can get on the Permanent Absentee Ballot List and have a Ballot mailed automatically.

A voter can request to be mailed an automatic absentee ballot. This means that an absentee ballot will be mailed to the voter for every election automatically.

The only voters who can request this option are those who can't get to the polls because they are indefinitely confined due to age, disability or infirmity. The voter must sign a statement that requests an automatic absentee ballot due to one or more of these conditions.

Voting if You Are in the Hospital

If you are in the hospital, you may choose someone to pick up an absentee ballot from your municipal (town, village or city) clerk's office before 5 p.m. on Election Day.

You must fill out an absentee ballot application (see page 12). The person who picks up the absentee ballot for you must bring the completed application to the clerk's office, show identification of their identity, provide their name and address, and swear that they are receiving the ballot for your use and will promptly deliver it to you.

You can have the person pick up your ballot no earlier than seven (7) days before the election. They must return the ballot by 8:00 p.m. on election day. You also have the option to return the absentee ballot by mail, provided it is postmarked on Election Day and received by 4:00 p.m. on the Friday after election day.

Voting if You Live in an Institution, Residential Facility or Nursing Home

If you live in an institution, residential facility or licensed nursing home, you may use this as your legal voting address or you may choose to use your previous address.

Nursing Homes are required to make plans with their city, town or village clerk's office to provide specific voting times for all registered or qualified voters. These voting times must be held no later than the Monday before Election Day.

Check with the office of the facility where you live to find out if voting times have been set up. If they have not been set up, you should contact your city, town or village clerk's office and request an absentee ballot (see page 12).

Elections in Wisconsin

There are two types of elections: nonpartisan and partisan. Nonpartisan elections are for officials including judges, Supreme Court justices, county board members and county executives, municipal officials, and public education officials. These are held in the spring.

Partisan elections are for officials that include all other county administrative officials (like the Sheriff), members of the state legislature, state constitutional officers (except state school superintendent), members of the U.S. Congress, and president. Usually these are held in the fall.

Primary Elections

Primary elections are held to reduce the number of candidates for the general election.

Partisan primary elections are held to select a political party's nominees for offices elected at the general election. These are held on the second Tuesday in August.

Nonpartisan primary elections are held to reduce the number of candidates for an office. The nonpartisan primary is held on the third Tuesday in February.

In presidential election years, the presidential preference primary vote is held in conjunction with the spring election in April.

Fall General Elections

Fall General Elections are for partisan offices. These are held in even numbered years in November. In general elections you can vote for your:

- State Representative (every 2 years)
- State Senator (every 4 years)
- Governor (every 4 years)
- Congressperson (every 2 years)
- U.S. Senator (every 6 years)
- President (every 4 years)

Spring General Elections

Spring General Elections are for nonpartisan offices. These are held in April to elect judges and local municipal, county, and education officials.

Special Elections

Special elections are held to fill vacancies or for other designated purposes, such as referendums or recalls. These vary as to when they are held. Referendums can also be held during regularly set election times.

Complaints

If you have complaints about access to voting or believe your voter's rights have been violated you may file a complaint with

Wisconsin Government Accountability Board

212 E. Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 7984
Madison, WI 53707- 7984
Phone: 608 266-8005
Toll free: 866 VOTEWIS (868-3947)
TTY: 800 947-3529
Email: gab@wi.gov
Website: <http://gab.wi.gov>

For help with filing a complaint or for advocacy assistance you may contact

Disability Rights Wisconsin

131 West Wilson Street, Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703
Voice: 608-267-0214
Toll free: 800-928-8778 (for consumers & families)
FAX: 608-267-0368
TTY: 888-758-6049
Website: www.disabilityrightswi.org

Wisconsin Coalition of Independent Living Centers

3810 Milwaukee Street
Madison, WI 53714
Voice/TTY: 608-444-3842
Toll free: 800-362-9877
Fax: 608-242-0383

Candidate Information

For information about candidates and the voting process

League of Women Voters of Wisconsin

122 State St., Suite 201A
Madison, WI 53703 - 2500
Voice: 608-256-0827
Fax: 608-256-1761
Email: lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org
Website: www.lwwwi.org

Your Rights and the Voting Process

*For information about your rights as a voter
and how to vote*

Disability Rights Wisconsin

131 West Wilson Street, Suite 700
Madison, WI 53703
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Email: lwwwisconsin@lwwwi.org
Website: www.lwwwi.org

Use this page to write down helpful information.

Your City, Town or Village Clerk's Office:

City/Town Name:

Clerk's Name:

Address:

City:

Zip Code:

Phone Number:

Fax Number:

Use this page to write down helpful information.

Website Address:

Email Address:

Your Polling Place:

Name of Location:

Address:

City:

Phone Number (if available):